

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13), responding to a new government report that says \$500 billion in cuts to Medicare will "sharply reduce benefits" to seniors, called today for congressional leaders to develop a health reform plan that will not punish the elderly or bankrupt America.

"I will not stand by while we devastate Medicare, one of the most important pillars of our nation's healthcare delivery system for senior citizens," Buchanan said.

Buchanan noted that Florida's 13th District is home to more than 267,000 seniors, making it the oldest congressional district in the country.

The Washington Post reported Sunday that the \$500 billion in Medicare cuts "contained in the health package approved by the House Nov. 7 are likely to prove so costly to hospitals and nursing homes that they could stop taking Medicare altogether." The article ran in Sunday's Sarasota Herald Tribune under the headline: "Medicare cuts deep, agency says."

The study was conducted by the chief actuary for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), which is the federal agency that administers Medicare in the Obama Administration.

The fact that an analysis released by an agency run by President Obama shows deep cuts to Medicare should be of concern to every senior citizen in our country, Buchanan said. When you add in that the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office reached many of the same conclusions, it is painfully obvious that Congress needs to start over with a bill that does not savage health care for seniors, Buchanan said.

These very cuts were used by the Democrats to claim their legislation would not escalate health care costs in the next decade. So, if they are removed from the reform package, Buchanan said cost-cutting would have to be achieved elsewhere to ensure that the measure does not balloon the federal deficit.

The report by the CMS analyst also said that because the bill expected to "add more than 30 million people to the ranks of the insured....providers are likely to charge high fees or take patients with better-paying private insurance."

"We have a bill that is going to make it possible for illegal immigrants to buy insurance yet at the same time cut Medicare and reduce benefits for our senior citizens," Buchanan said. "That is outrageous, wrong and needs to be rejected immediately."

Buchanan called on the U.S. Senate, which is now considering the bill, to abandon efforts to cut Medicare and devise a health reform bill that reduces costs and increases access without raising taxes or adding to the deficit. Buchanan supported such a bill in the House, but it was rejected by Democratic leaders.

"I will continue to fight for our seniors and oppose any bill that places the burden of health care reform on the backs of our seniors."